

# Fire



*"What I enjoy most is being a valued member of an organization that changes people's lives for the better. No day is the same and each alarm provides different challenges, which helps me retain an enthusiastic approach to my job."*

- Brad Boyd  
Firefighter and Paramedic







***The mission of the Fire Department is to minimize the loss of life and property resulting from fires, medical emergencies and other disasters through prevention, education and fire suppression activities.***

## RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Wichita retains an Insurance Service Organization (ISO) rating of 3, which saves Wichitans millions in homeowner's fire insurance premiums while holding the cost to achieve that rating down (it maximizes the net benefit to Wichitans). ISO ratings are based upon fire department apparatus, water supply (hydrants), and the quality of the dispatching system. The ISO scale is from 1-9, with 9 being the worst rating
- Increased equipment reliability and efficiency, along with reduced maintenance costs, resulted from ongoing replacement of the Fire apparatus fleet.
- Overtime was reduced dramatically due to a shift in hiring practices to anticipate retirements with overfilled positions.
- The addition of Mobile Computer Terminals will allow Fire to increase efficiency in deployment strategies, tracking, and data analysis. MCT's will aid the department in creating a more effective deployment strategy.

## DEPARTMENT OBJECTIVES

- Educate public on fire prevention and safety.
- Safely, efficiently, and effectively suppress fires.
- Enforce City of Wichita fire codes.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Dept. Objective	Program Measure Description	2001 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Actual	2004 Projected	2005 Projected
1	Number of blood pressure screenings	11,569	11,842	10,400	12,350	12,400
1	Number of educational programs	234	608	255	380	390
1	Number of staff hours invested in Juvenile Education	148	135	140	98	102
2	Average dollar loss/fire	\$5,891	\$6,212	\$8,613	\$6,400	\$6,300
2	Average response time (all alarms)	N/A	7.6	6.5	6.5	6.5
2	Percentage of structure fires & fires involving real property controlled within the level of involvement	91%	89%	90%	91%	92%
2	Number of Firefighter injuries per 100 fires	2.0	0.3	1.2	0.5	0.5
2	Number of civilian injuries per 100,000 population	8.3	10.2	16.4	9.7	9.6
2	Number of civilian deaths per 100,000 population	2.0	0.9	1.4	1.0	1.0
3	Number of fires investigated	287	238	231	225	220
3	Number of accidental fires	172	126	133	115	110
3	Number of incendiary fires	108	102	79	95	90
3	Number of inspections	374	180	169	200	210
3	Number of arrests	21	35	113	33	35
3	Number of citations issued	75	23	27	25	25



## OVERVIEW

From eighteen stations located strategically throughout Wichita, the Fire Department provides fire suppression and emergency response to citizens of Wichita. Fire suppression activities are handled by squads (trucks fitted with pumping units in the bed), pumpers (engines with large pumping capabilities), quints (pumpers with hydraulic extendable ladders), and aerial platforms (pumpers with a platform on the hydraulic extendable ladders).

Firefighters are usually the first to arrive on the scene of emergencies, (fires, car wrecks, natural disasters, and 911 calls to residential and business locations). Because of this, firefighters are trained to deliver BLS (Basic Life Support), which makes up 70% of their calls. Basic life support is maintenance of the ABCs (airway, breathing, and circulation) without auxiliary equipment. BLS saves lives, as the human body quickly deteriorates after 4-6 minutes of oxygen deprivation.

*During the budget period 2004-2013, \$23.5 million in CIP funds is included for Fire apparatus replacement.*

WFD operates a training facility where, on average, staff trains 18 recruits annually, as well as continuously refreshing and updating the training and preparedness of all fire suppression staff. Maintenance of fire apparatus is coordinated through a central maintenance facility, managed by the Public Works Department.

The department maintains a four-member Arson Investigation unit, which investigates all suspicious fires. Arson investigators also assist in the inspection function, along with three other inspector positions. Additional positions are dedicated to public education and prevention.



*Firefighters, equipped with advanced apparatus, enter a burning house.*

## DIVISION DESCRIPTIONS

Fire is organized into two divisions: Operations and Administration.



*Firefighters, some who are also certified paramedics, secure and transfer a patient after a car accident. Over 70 percent of the calls the WFD responds to are Emergency Medical related and the WFD is the first responder on the scene 70 percent of the time.*

**Operations:** The majority of the Fire Department resources are focused on fire suppression and medical response activities. Fire staff, tactically located at stations throughout Wichita, provides these services. There are currently 18 stations, with two more anticipated in the near future (scheduled in the CIP for 2005 and 2007). In addition, the strategic relocation of eight stations, five of which are already complete, will reduce response times that are already below the national average. Currently, each station is generally staffed with five firefighters per shift and two pieces of equipment, a quick response vehicle (squads) and a fire engine. At battalion stations, additional fire engines are staffed. Aerials and a tender (a truck with a 5,000 gallon water tank for use in areas with no hydrants) are available at five stations. Three Battalion Chiefs per shift provide 24-hour direct supervision to Operations staff during all three shifts.

*Tornados, the DeBruce Elevator explosion, the Baby Jessica well rescue and flooding in West Wichita highlight a need for enhanced rescue equipment and training*

Performance of the fire suppression staff is measured in a variety of ways. Response times are low at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile because of the number and location of stations, and other variables.





*The Wichita Fire Department recently took delivery of five new Pierce apparatus. These state of the art machines will enhance fire department responsiveness and fire suppression capabilities.*

Fire suppression staff not only fights fires and save lives, they are actively involved in the neighborhoods surrounding their stations. Staff often provide station tours, give safety presentations, and participate in neighborhood block parties. As part of a neighborhood outreach effort, free blood pressure screenings are provided and firefighters are often invited to, and participate in, neighborhood events.

Tornados, the DeBruce Elevator explosion, the Baby Jessica well rescue, and flooding in West Wichita underscore the need for enhanced rescue equipment and training. Because of these traumatic events, the Fire Department maintains a specialty rescue group that includes hazardous materials and specialty rescue team, a heavy rescue team, a water rescue team, and a high angle rescue team. The equipment needs of these special operations teams have been addressed by earmarking equipment replacement funds. In addition, a new heavy rescue vehicle was purchased in 2003.

Response time is important, but only if firefighters have the equipment to suppress the fire in an effective way. Effectively fighting a fire (containing fires to the room of origin and minimizing the average-dollar-loss per fire) necessitates appropriate and well-maintained equipment. The budget continues the initiative to replace hoses and nozzles on a ten-year replacement program to ensure reliability. Included in the budget is the ladder replacement program, in which all of the Department's field ladders are modernized. In addition to the department's breathing apparatus upgrade, the department's hand held radios were upgraded through a grant, which reduced the maintenance expenses associated with the radios.

**Arson Investigation:** Four investigator positions are budgeted at a cost of over \$260,000, including one Captain and three Lieutenants. The Lieutenants, with the Captain supplementing

operations on a 40-hour schedule, provide coverage on 24-hour shifts. Annually, Arson staff investigates approximately 300 fires and yields about 30 arrests. In the past, the conviction rate for cases tried has been over 90 percent. Each year, one arson investigator determines causation of 70 fires and makes an average of nine arrests.

**Maintenance:** During this Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget period (2004-2013), \$23.5 million in CIP funds is included for Fire apparatus replacement. The Fire Department operates a fleet of 53 apparatus and various support vehicles. In 2002, the responsibility for maintaining this equipment was transferred from Fire to Public Works – Central Maintenance Facility. The Central Maintenance Facility has continuously maintained smaller compact sedans driven by fire officials. Fire apparatus maintenance, under the direction of Public Works, is performed in a Fire Maintenance facility centrally located near downtown.

The Fire Building Maintenance section was streamlined in 2001 with the transfer of one position from Fire to Public Works. In addition, fire hydrant maintenance was consolidated within the Water Department, resulting in the transfer of one position from the Fire Department to the Water Department. On-duty firefighters continue to support both activities.

**Safety and Training:** Six positions (five commissioned) attached to Fire Operations perform safety officer and training functions for the Department. The positions include three Captains on 24-hour shifts and three 40-hour employees. Safety Officers are dispatched to every fire and major accident, and direct the response of fire crews to ensure firefighter safety. One position is dedicated to air pack and other equipment maintenance and certification, while another coordinates medical training and quality control. In addition, the safety and training staff are responsible for fire recruit training and for developing drill training.

**Safety Officers are dispatched to every fire and major accident, and direct the response of fire crews to ensure firefighter safety.**

**Prevention:** The budget funds nine positions dedicated to public education and inspection functions. Inspection duties include high hazard occupancies, high-rise buildings, health care and day care facilities, schools, hospitals, and grain elevators. This section also monitors burn permits, inspects applicants for liquor licenses, and ensures citizen safety at events including fireworks displays and concerts. Fire Operations staff heavily supplement the inspection function, performing over 80 percent of the inspections.



**Public Education:** Staff conducts fire safety and prevention training in addition to inspections on properties requiring state certification. Staff develops programs to assist large corporations in emergency evacuation procedures, and assists in training for Operations Division staff. Operations staff, with station tours, smoke detector installation, and other activities, supplements the public education role.



*A Fire Lieutenant talks to schoolchildren about fire safety and prevention.*

In 2000, three positions were shifted from the Fire Department to the Office of Central Inspection (OCI) to enhance the efficiency of this area. These staff coordinates with inspectors from OCI to review plans related to fire suppression systems, fire alarm systems, fire apparatus access, and water supply analysis. In addition, plan reviews for special occupancies, including hazardous waste facilities and chemical storage areas, are performed in coordination with OCI. As commissioned positions performing this role have separated from service, these tasks have been integrated into the workload of OCI Inspectors. Currently, one commissioned position remains.

**Administration:** The Fire Chief and six civilian personnel handle the administrative oversight of the department. A civilian Assistant to the Chief is responsible for monitoring budgetary compliance, purchasing, soliciting grants, supervising payroll functions and providing general support to the Chief. The administration of the Firehouse software system is performed in the Operations section, with support from the staff of Information Technology. Firehouse was implemented in 2000, replacing an antiquated system used to log alarm call information. The new system has the capability to integrate call data, fleet maintenance and inspection data into one centralized system.

## FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

The operating budget for the Fire Department is financed entirely from the General Fund. During this CIP budget period 2004-2013, \$8 million is included to comprehensively relocate fire stations, and to construct two new stations. The moves will allow the Fire Department to adequately service newly annexed areas, while enhancing the responsiveness to existing citizens. Over 30 years, the capital investment in station relocation and construction is expected to save over \$30 million in operating costs. The relocation of five stations in 2003 has occurred, with three more relocations and two new stations planned in the next five years.

The Fire Operations budget includes almost \$25 million for wages for the 374 front line firefighters who provide 24-hour emergency response to City residents from a network of 18 stations. Firefighters respond to over 35,000 alarms each year, including 1,800 fires and almost 23,200 medical alarms. In recent years, alarm volume has increased significantly, primarily in the area of medical calls

## FUTURE CHALLENGES

- Maintaining response times below the national standard of 8 minutes at the 90 percentile
- Providing above average services at below average costs to a growing population and geographic area
- Integrating a new performance management system into the existing organization
- Keeping the department's ISO rating at three or below
- Relocating Fire Station #15 and construction of Fire Stations #6 and/or #20
- Implementing a P.A.S. (a personnel-tracking system) to ensure firefighters are accounted for during large fires or other substantial events.
- Examining the efficiency, effectiveness, and work load of the Fire Prevention Division, looking for possible efficiencies to gain and future needs address
- Enhancing services to Wichita citizens through the offering of Advanced Life Support First Responder (ALS Paramedic Pumps)
- Continuing to ensure a work force reflective of the community's diversity
- Relocating or enhancing fire service training facilities
- Replacing the high pressure cascade system



### Fire Department Budget Summary

	2003 Actual	2004 Adopted	2004 Revised	2005 Adopted	2006 Approved
Personal Services	23,680,461	25,424,560	25,729,190	26,485,670	27,799,060
Contractual Services	1,292,090	1,500,620	1,526,380	1,596,630	1,624,520
Commodities	464,207	503,820	533,970	518,370	530,370
Capital Outlay	0	20,900	20,900	20,900	20,900
Other	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Fire Department Expenditures</b>	<b>25,436,758</b>	<b>27,449,900</b>	<b>27,810,440</b>	<b>28,621,560</b>	<b>29,974,850</b>
General Fund	25,436,758	27,449,900	27,810,440	28,621,560	29,974,850
<b>Total Fire Department Resources</b>	<b>25,436,758</b>	<b>27,449,900</b>	<b>27,810,440</b>	<b>28,621,560</b>	<b>29,974,850</b>
Total full-time positions	370	390	390	390	397
Total civilian positions	7	7	7	7	7
Total FTE positions	377	397	397	397	404

For additional information on the Fire Department visit [www.wichita.gov](http://www.wichita.gov)



## Wichita Fire Department

*Started as a volunteer fire company on February 14, 1871, the Wichita Fire Department celebrates its 118th year as a paid department on August 23, 2004.*

*The first salaried employee was A.G. Walden, appointed the City's first Fire Marshall in 1886. By the time Station No. 4 went up at Seneca and Douglas in 1888, firefighters were alerted to a fire either by telephone or by the activation of electric alarm boxes situated around the City. In 1894, the first black firefighter, Charles Shoots, was hired. Two years later, G.W. "Cap" Robinson joined the force and in 1920 became the first African American to hold the position of Captain.*

*In the spring of 1872, a department was formed, Company". The city's first man named Charlie Fuller \$8 per month, he ran ahead "yelling for everyone to get*

*Through donations, the city ladder truck and housed it in frame building at 220 N. pay for the alarm bell out of*



*formal volunteer fire called the "Frontier Fire paid employee was a young who was the "torch boy". For of the firemen with a torch, out of the way."*

*purchased the first hook and the first fire house, a small Market. The firemen had to their own pockets.*

*Fire House number 2 was constructed at 232 S. Topeka in 1885 and new equipment was purchased. Firemen began receiving pay for their services - \$1 for each night run and \$1.50 for each day run. They were issued uniforms consisting of a black rubber coat, rubber boots, and a huge rubber helmet.*

*Motorized equipment was introduced in 1909. By 1918, the transition from horses (whose drivers were not only required to care for but also sleep next to), to gasoline power was complete, making the Wichita Fire Department the first completely motorized department in the United States and the second in the world.*